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ABSTRACT

Shifting from traditional, hierarchical bureaucracies to participatory governance and decision making is a major theme in school restructuring. This paper focuses on the involvement of teachers in key aspects of school decision making. Specifically, the paper describes how changes in power relations supported teachers' focus on improving the intellectual quality of their own and students' work. The 24 schools that participated in the School Restructuring Study (conducted by the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools) illustrated four types of power relations, only one of which appears to hold promise for the promotion of authentic pedagogy. The four types included consolidated, balkanized, laissez-faire, and shared decision making. Findings indicate that restructuring school decision making, in terms of either structures or power relations, does not necessarily improve the quality of pedagogy provided to students. Participatory decision making, when power was shared, could facilitate more authentic pedagogy and learning. Within a school culture that valued intellectual quality, shared power in decision making reinforced that priority and helped to support sustained programmatic efforts to achieve instructional goals more than the other three patterns. Principal and teacher leadership played a key role in facilitating the sharing of power and advancing the school's vision for high quality teaching and learning. The data show how cultural aspects of a school's power relations interact with formal structures of decision making. One figure is included. (Contains 6 endnotes and 22 references.) (LMI)

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CHAPTER 10

PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING

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CHAPTER 10

PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING

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Thus far, we have focused on how schools offer curriculum, instruction, and other kinds of support for students to achieve at high levels. We now turn to the ways in which aspects of school governance can contribute to sustained attention to the intellectual quality of teaching and learning. Shifting from traditional, hierarchical bureaucracies to participatory governance and decision making is a major theme in school restructuring. This theme includes two distinct strands. The first emphasizes the shift in authority from the district office to individual schools, often calling for increased accountability at the school level.[1] The second emphasizes changes in the decision-making roles of teachers, parents, principals and students within a school.[2] In this chapter we will focus on the involvement of teachers in key aspects of school decision making (the role of parents and districts is considered in Chapter 11).

The SRS schools all made efforts to change governance, but not all were equally successful in providing effective classroom experiences for students, that is, authentic pedagogy. And while all schools changed the formal structure of governance roles and processes, the ways in which power was actually enacted varied considerably between schools. We found that schools illustrated four distinct types of power relations, only one of which appears to hold promise for the promotion of authentic pedagogy. We illustrate this conclusion with examples of how the changes in power relations supported teachers' sustained

focus on improving the intellectual quality of their own and students work. The chapter also examines the crucial roles of school leaders and external agencies in sustaining altered power relations.

School Decision Making and Instructional Improvement

Advocates of participatory decision making for teachers assume that it will enhance individual and organizational performance, thus improving the quality of instruction in schools. Decentralization of school districts and schools, they argue, enables those closest to classrooms and students to make decisions that can most benefit learning and achievement.[3] Participation in decision making, advocates contend, will enhance opportunities for teachers to use professional expertise to improve school effectiveness, leading to more innovative and vital school environments. Additionally, democratic processes will motivate faculty to exert greater effort and demonstrate more commitment as they work toward common goals.[4]

Despite the promise of participatory decision making, research investigating its relationship to change in classroom practices has established no clear relationship (for reviews, see Conley, 1991; Fullan, 1991; Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990; Murphy & Beck, 1995; and Smylie, 1994). The investment of time in governance can intensify teachers' work, initiate and escalate conflict, and slow the pace of reform (see, e.g., Hannaway, 1993; Hargreaves, 1994; and Weiss, Cambone, & Wyeth, 1992). Where site-based management, shared decision making, and other strategies shift formal authority to the school, administrators' attentions are often deflected away from altering power relations *in actual practice*. Although the self-managing school is ostensibly more democratic, traditional school

authorities may use such reform initiatives to maintain their control (see, e.g., Bimber, 1994; Bryk, Easton, Kerbow, Rollow, & Sebring, 1993; Smyth, 1993; and Weiler, 1990).

While restructuring governance will not automatically alter the quality of teaching and learning, we found that it can be a facilitative condition. In the next sections, we describe four types of power relationships within innovative governance structures and explore the ways in which shared power relations promoted one of the central principles of successful school restructuring -- sustained attention to the intellectual substance of student learning. This, in turn, supported authentic pedagogy.

Formal Structures and Power Relations

Taking as our focus decision making *within schools*, we examine the extent of teachers' involvement in decisions traditionally outside their scope of influence. We consider decision making in whole school governance bodies, and also in committees and teams which typically have more specific responsibilities. Central to our analysis is the distinction between the governance *structure*, reflected in changes in the organization chart and defined responsibilities for decision making, and the *culture of power relations*, that is, the norms, values and commonly accepted behaviors that affect the operation of the formal structures.

Formal Structures

Unlike private-sector models advocating participatory decision-making, the literature on school governance reform has not provided "how-to-do-it" blueprints. Thus, the SRS schools implemented diverse approaches to shared decision making in their formal structures. These included: consensus decision making by whole faculties; elected steering committees, cabinets, and improvement teams; community and advisory councils; teacher management

teams in lieu of a principal; extensive faculty committee structures to support aspects of restructuring; and semi-autonomous teaching teams. Schools varied in decision-making roles for parents and students, and in their use of school-wide versus decentralized decision making. In all of the schools, however, participants viewed structural changes as important elements of their reform efforts.

The Culture of Power Relations

In spite of the structural changes, schools differed in altering actual power relations from the traditional pattern. Putting participatory decision making into practice requires a difficult shift in the actual exercise of power and influence by teachers and others in these settings. Consistent with the emerging literature on the micro-politics of schools (e.g., Ball, 1987, and Blase, 1991), we analyze actors' use of power and influence in their specific contexts. We focus on critical issues such as individual and collective autonomy, the extent of cohesiveness among teachers, norms about how decisions should be made and by whom, and the degree to which group decisions were binding. Our examination of the actual exercise of power in the SRS schools revealed four types of power relations: consolidated, balkanized, laissez faire, or shared. Twenty-two of the SRS schools could be classified as clearly falling into one of these categories.[5] Next, we define these four types of power relations, and illustrate each with a detailed example from one of the SRS schools.

Consolidated Power Relations

When power was *consolidated* in schools, the principal, district personnel or a small group of teachers limited broad participation in decision making. Thus, most teachers were unable to influence key policy and programmatic issues. Cohesiveness in the school was

viewed as important but controlled by the power holders. Of the eight schools we classified as consolidated, Selway Middle School (discussed further in Chapter 11) is the clearest example:

> *Selway*, initiated in 1989 as a small school focused on technology and individualized learning, was a school of choice for parents, children and teachers in the district and surrounding communities. Formally, governance was to be in the hands of teachers and shared with a School Council consisting of parents, students, staff, and representatives from the community. Although there was a part-time principal, a Lead Team of four teachers had primary responsibility for school policy, administration, and curriculum. From the beginning, the Lead Team teachers made all important decisions, including final judgments regarding interpretations of school philosophy and climate, as well as actual policy determinations. Their actions tended to inhibit other teachers' opportunities to talk freely about school-wide issues and to undermine the confidence of new or inexperienced teachers, making them vulnerable to criticism and uncertain of whether they were "teaching right." To illustrate this point, a staff member discussed why one teacher had left the school: "The message from the lead staff was that, 'we welcome ideas, we welcome change; if you've got ideas, let us know.' [But] what happened after her first day here was a road block when it came to her ideas and her inventions and her hopes... She was just banging her head (against) these people."

Balkanized Power Relations

In *balkanized* schools, teachers and administrators coalesced in multiple sub-groups, which typically communicated poorly with each other. Power was dispersed among these smaller groups, each of which guarded their increased influence and autonomy. Disagreements and inter-group conflict often made school-wide decision making very difficult, and individuals in the school believed that cohesiveness in school practices was neither necessary, nor possible to achieve. Four schools exhibited this pattern, and Fremont High illustrates many common characteristics:

> *Fremont* had one of the most elaborated formal decision-making structures of the SRS schools. A Steering Committee, whose meetings were open to anyone, including parents and students as well as teachers and the principal, made policy and programmatic decisions after receiving input from the whole faculty or other bodies. A variety of sub-committees fed into the Steering Committee, including interdisciplinary grade level teams and curriculum, budget, and student service committees. In addition to these organizational forms, Fremont retained traditional subject matter departments. Decisions in all these structures were to be made by consensus. However, staff disagreements about restructuring undermined school-wide cohesiveness and high levels of participation. The Steering Committee, as a result, became reactive, rejecting proposals that had broad teacher support but lacked unanimity, such as a plan to place all teachers on teams. Fremont teachers formed independent groups associated with various aspects of reform. The math teachers, for example,

retreated to their department when their attempts to influence school-wide issues were defeated. Committed to NCTM standards, they saw proposals to extend an interdisciplinary curriculum as undermining their content goals. These teachers also pushed unsuccessfully for rapid evaluations of new programs while others (including the principal) opposed them. Members of the math department, while persisting in their own vision of improved educational quality, rejected all-school restructuring.

Laissez-faire Power Relations

We observed *laissez-faire* power relations where teachers prized individual autonomy and acted independently to achieve disparate goals. In these schools we saw a great deal of restructuring activity, but staff used decision making to increase personal autonomy. The individualistic culture resulted in a proliferation of programs which undermined any common vision of curriculum and pedagogy. Arguing that the pursuit of their individual interests would benefit students, teachers did not value cohesiveness in the school. Sumpter Elementary exemplifies the three laissez-faire schools we found.[6]

Sumpter, like Selway, was a teacher-run school. Staff elected a teacher facilitator and three coordinators (for academics, evaluation, and building and grounds) for two-years terms. The facilitator was relieved of teaching responsibilities, but the three coordinators accepted administrative duties in addition to their regular teaching assignments. This team carried out the major administrative affairs of the school, but the whole staff convened weekly to make major policy decisions. The

culture of the school strongly reinforced teacher innovation and rewarded teachers who initiated programs. Typically teachers presented a rationale for a program or effort they believed in, and received authorization to act from the faculty-as-a-whole. Innovations generally involved one or two teachers, but even when initiatives had implications for the whole school, no teacher had to participate. For example, faculty narrowly passed an "inclusion" program that mainstreamed special education students by forming teaching teams of regular and special education teachers. Since some staff strongly advocated the policy and the nonparticipating majority felt they should not stand in their way, they added the proviso that no teacher had to team if she did not want to. One of the teachers summed up the broad-based, yet individualistic, exercise of power evident at the school, "All I have to do is submit a plan; if I can support it, I can teach it."

Shared Power Relations

When power was *shared*, decision making involved participation throughout the staff, equal access and voice, reciprocity, and a focus on issues relevant to the collective good. Unlike the consolidated power schools, influence here was distributed relatively equally. In contrast to balkanized and laissez-faire schools, schools with shared power relations focused on key elements of a school-wide restructuring plan, and frequently made binding decisions about curriculum and pedagogy. Most teachers agreed that they had both a right and a responsibility to participate in decisions; they valued and nurtured shared power, and paid

attention to strategies to maintain broad involvement. These schools used decision-making opportunities to reinforce both common values and coherent practices in classrooms. Seven schools exercised shared power relations. Because this pattern of participatory decision making is the basis of our ensuing discussion, we examine two different examples, Ashley Elementary School and Okanagon Middle School (discussed in Chapter 4).

> As part of its improvement plan, the district instituted site-based management at *Ashley* in 1988. The school promoted shared decision making through a 12-person Advisory Council which included parents, teachers, community members, support staff and administrators. Teachers exercised influence and responsibility in decision making through a variety of groups and committees. Although the principal retained final responsibility for and veto power over school decisions, she rarely exercised it. Rather than viewing the principal as "the decision maker," faculty saw her as the school's advocate, describing examples in which she fought and won battles with the district over site-based budgeting, hiring, waivers on standardized testing, and grading policies. Teachers took considerable initiative as well. For example, three teachers formulated and won district approval for a proposal to create a combined 4th/5th grade class for at-risk students and a waiver on burdensome district requirements for special education documentation. The hiring process for new staff involved the relevant grade level teachers and the principal in interviewing candidates.

Consensus decision making among teachers was the rule. In one instance when teachers could not come to agreement and wanted the principal to decide, she refused, delegating the issue back to them. *Okanagon*, a large middle school designated as a magnet school in the district's desegregation plan, obtained status as a Charter School in 1994. A Community Council, composed of faculty and professional staff, parents, and students, met biweekly and was responsible for school-wide policy. Other formal decision-making bodies included staff committees, teams, and whole staff. Overall, the school had a decentralized decision making system without a consistent process for delegating issues to various bodies, although the staff exercised considerable power in these groups and arenas.

At Okanagon the instructional team was a primary arena for influence. Each team was responsible for curriculum decisions, grouping their 160 students, and creating the weekly schedule. Teams varied considerably in how they operated. The principal discussed the philosophy of decision making at the team level, "The empowering piece is simple. The people closest in proximity to teaching and learning must have most of the power... The only way to know how to intervene differently is to know the children... Basically, we say there are two levels of decision making at this school: the educational [team] and the community council. And it's sacred, that all decisions that have

to do with teaching and learning are made only by [teams]... They do whatever they need to do to get the dream on earth."

Each teaching team designated a team leader who served on the Community Council and attended weekly team leaders' meetings. One team leader explained, "I am responsible for the administration of the [team] as well as meeting with other leaders and formally deciding on strategies for school-wide things. I have never felt more empowered as a teacher to deal with school issues." A faculty committee illustrates teachers' influence on school-wide issues. The Curriculum Committee consisting of representatives from each of the teams had formal responsibility for policy decisions and implementation on curriculum issues. At a curriculum committee meeting researchers attended in the fall, the committee continued their work of setting school-wide performance standards as they discussed guidelines for completing the Homeroom section of progress reports. In terms of actual influence, the committee set the benchmarks against which every homeroom teacher in the school was to evaluate their students.

Shared Power, Intellectual Quality and Authentic Pedagogy

Do the different types of power relations we have outlined help to explain the connection between participatory decision making and authentic pedagogy? We will first show how the typology is related to the school's scores on authentic pedagogy, and then discuss how some forms of power relations contributed to improved classroom practices.

Figure 10.1 illustrates the association of schools clustered by type of power relations and authentic pedagogy. This figure suggests two conclusions. First, some of the schools with consolidated, balkanized, or laissez-faire power relations were making progress toward more authentic pedagogy and achievement. In particular, three of the consolidated power schools appear among the top group in promoting student learning. However, six of the seven shared power schools were among the most successful in terms of authentic pedagogy. Thus, we are led to explore further the ways in which shared power relations and some forms of consolidated power relations support teachers' focus on intellectual quality for student learning.

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Consolidated Power Relations and Sustained Focus on Intellectual Quality

Careen Elementary exemplifies a highly successful school with consolidated power. Chapter 6 described in detail how a focus on intellectual quality supported its development. And the portrait's description (Chapter 3) of the prominent role of the district administrator suggested the possibility of consolidated power.

> At *Careen*, in contrast to many of the other schools, formal decision-making structures were poorly defined. The rhetoric of teacher involvement in school-wide decision making was not always honored in practice. A district change agent catalyzed the initial programmatic agenda for the school and hired most of the staff. In many ways, her actions placed teachers in the role of implementors. As a result, few decisions were made by teachers in the six design teams or the advisory

council. "The school is very controlled from the central office," explained a former district administrator.

Ostensibly a teacher-run school, Careen had two teacher-directors responsible for coordinating decision making. But by controlling topics for discussion and the flow of information, they limited broader participation. Some teachers felt manipulated, but the consolidation of power was not absolute nor inflexible. Teachers did make decisions on the curriculum and were developing criteria for portfolio assessment. In some cases teacher consensus resulted in upward influence -- for example, when they convinced the district administrator to permit teachers to select materials for portfolios, in addition to those selected by students.

Because a vision of school reform, as reflected in the tenets of Applied Learning, was a criterion for hiring decisions, teachers' individual efforts were especially focused on student learning. Nevertheless, because the district program involved unique and demanding tasks (such as developing narrative student reports instead of grades), teachers felt the district agenda controlled their work. In short, teachers embraced Careen's vision, but did not want to be manipulated in their practice of it.

This case suggests that where administrators and teachers share values and objectives for student learning, teachers can achieve high quality instruction under fairly heavy-handed

administrative control. However, the unresolved tension between the district's agenda and teachers' concerns might eventually undermine their focus on intellectual quality.

Shared Power Relations and Sustained Focus on Intellectual Quality

Change in power relations is no guarantee of improved teaching and learning. But the broad participation, reciprocity, and collective focus on important issues characteristic of shared power facilitated further success in those schools where staff concurred on the goal of intellectually demanding pedagogy. In this section, we illustrate how shared decision making in three of these schools contributed to the intellectual substance of student learning.

At *Ashley*, teachers, in grade level teams under teacher leadership, engaged in extensive curriculum planning. A focus on whole language guided their deliberations for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Teachers' definitions of whole language included such dimensions as "real world experiences," "higher order thinking," and "in-depth work and problem-solving," corresponding closely to standards of authentic pedagogy.

Teachers' exercise of power also included teacher-initiated programmatic efforts that sustained their intellectual focus. Three activities exemplify this. First, the school sponsored a yearly, one-day in-service conference for state educators. Most of Ashley's teachers participated as presenters. In addition to raising significant sums of money, the conference validated individual and school efforts, and prompted teachers to reflect together on their work. Second, a group of

> Ashley teachers were involved in Reading Recovery, an intensive interventionist program for students struggling with learning to read. In so doing, they conducted peer observations and critical discussions of pedagogy, and also discussed the Reading Recovery principles with other teachers in the school. Finally, the faculty study committee, comprising teachers and the assistant principal, directed whole-school staff development. Monthly meetings focused on whole language for grade K-2 teachers and self-esteem and thematic units for grade 3-5 teachers, further supporting their focus on student learning.

Ashley illustrates an important feature of shared power relations in practice. The emphasis in this school was not on the formal decision-making process (although teachers were involved in this as well), but on teachers' implementation of and responsibility for the school's curriculum and instructional programs, as well as their own professional development.

Ashley's medium size permitted a high level of all-school participation in several critical activities. As we turn to a much larger middle school, we see how the principles of shared power relations can operate in a more complex setting as well, through a system of faculty committees and sub-committees that took charge of critical aspects of pedagogy:

> At *Okanagon* the Portfolio Committee met every other week. Seven core members -- all volunteers from the Curriculum Committee -- participated regularly. Many of these seven were active in one or more of the national or state-level assessment projects. The committee

developed the Student Personal Reflection sheet used throughout the school for self-analysis and peer review of portfolio submissions. They also decided upon quarterly school-wide performance assessments in math and language arts, developed the scoring rubrics, and trained the rest of the staff in using the rubrics. The emphasis on extended writing across the curriculum, problem solving, and in-depth learning reinforced the school's focus on intellectual quality for student learning. The training and use of scoring rubrics provided the substance for on-going programmatic development consistent with that focus.

Interdisciplinary, thematic units and long-term projects often dominated grade-level team discussions. For example, in one team, teachers developed a multi-disciplinary curriculum project, 'Design a House,' calling for a design on paper and a constructed model. The house was to be ecologically sound and appropriate for the particular biome the student-groups decided upon. Team meetings, thus, offered opportunities for collective faculty decision making that contributed to their focus on intellectual quality.

Many of Okanagon's staff dedicated out-of-school time to decision making that focused on improving student learning. Much of this effort emphasized the development of common standards for assessment, including designing and scoring school-wide authentic tests in English and mathematics. Because it was a large school, many critical decisions were delegated to powerful sub-committees whose work the staff viewed as binding. Not all schools would want or be willing to engage in such a time-consuming process, nor tolerate

such broad exercise of power by colleagues. Red Lake Middle School (described in Chapter 4) illustrates a faculty whose model of shared power relations confronted the tension between individual participation and consensus:

> At *Red Lake*, teachers, individually or in teams, designed their own courses, "teaching to their passion." Department reviews of courses helped to ensure broad-based understanding of the total school program and provided a means for the staff to act upon a tacit instructional philosophy that supported intellectual quality. Much of the consensus at Red Lake occurred because the staff was constantly involved in conversation about the intellectual focus of their work, not only through the committee structure, but through persistent "hall talk." At Red Lake, unity of intellectual purpose evolved largely though informal discussion in a decisively participatory decision-making culture of the school.
>
> An incident involving the faculty Curriculum Committee demonstrated the unique commitment of Red Lake's staff to democratic governance. Based on his perception that staff wanted to examine and improve the school's overall curriculum, the principal formed the committee (consisting of himself, six teachers, two students and two parents) to make specific recommendations for improving the curriculum. But during their process of study, research, and reflection, the Curriculum Committee incurred staff resentment. One non-member explained, "Over the period of time they worked, for nearly a year, it

was kind of a mystery as to what they were doing. I don't know if that allowed for some of the mistrust or suspicion or whatever to germinate without having further input (from the rest of the staff)." After a year, the Curriculum Committee attempted to report on their work at a regular staff meeting, but teachers objected to the process and the committee subsequently disbanded.

Participatory governance, through a combination of formal and informal decision making, had become such an integral part of the culture at Red Lake that teachers' disenfranchisement nullified a year of reflective, perhaps productive, effort by the Curriculum Committee. A committee that oversteps its bounds and fails to create a compromise consensus among all staff members at Red Lake will not succeed.

Sustaining Shared Power Relations

Teachers in many of the SRS schools reminded us of the fragility of altered power relations in school restructuring. They noted that their ability to sustain new practices of decision making depended largely on the principal's commitment to shared governance and on the district's willingness to support school autonomy. In other words, they did not believe their involvement in participatory governance was well institutionalized. In this section, we discuss how school leaders continued to be crucial, and how external agencies can limit a school's authority and influence.

School Leadership

In contrast to early rhetoric concerning restructuring, the roles of principals have not disappeared, but they have shifted. Principals in schools with shared power relations provided

stable facilitative leadership committed to the school's mission. Their actions encouraged teacher leadership and contributed to the school's persistent focus on intellectual quality.

Principal leadership took several forms. First, principals nurtured decision making by teachers. As secure and energetic leaders in their own right, they were able to cultivate the nascent leadership of teachers in a variety of arenas. They found time and resources for teachers to discuss and develop new instructional approaches. At *Red Lake*, for example, the principal thought of himself and was perceived by others at the school and in the district as "a process person." He described it this way, "My job is to facilitate the group figuring it out. I'll have a voice in that and share my thoughts. But I just don't believe you change by telling people what to do." His use of power, viewed as a key element in Red Lake's restructuring, helped others to exercise power -- including parents, teachers and students. Overall, principal leadership provided motivation and ideas, as well as symbolic and managerial support for teacher leadership and activism in decision making.

Second, principals encouraged experimentation. As one teacher at *Ashley* reported, "I think the thing about this school is that everybody wants everybody to succeed. And our principal wants us to succeed. If I make a mistake she would never fuss, she would just say let's see how we can make it better. And she gives us so many opportunities to make it better." The principal at Ashley took an active role in issues of curriculum and instruction. For example she actively helped them to define expectations for whole language instruction. She also helped to construct an environment that encouraged teacher leadership and risk taking in the classroom. One teacher noted, the principal "draws people out and then she

turns it over to you." Another explained that "participation in decisions ... contributes to an atmosphere here of teachers caring about each other and helping each other out."

Third, principals were entrepreneurial and spurred the same quality in teachers. They secured not only ideas, but grants and external recognition which sustained their school's focus and development. At *Red Lake*, for example, the principal's initiative helped to bring in a number of state grants that provided time for teachers to develop the curriculum. At *Ashley*, the principal encouraged all teachers to write proposals to obtain resources for their classrooms (and most did), and she actively supported their yearly conference which brought in a substantial flexible income for the school.

Fourth, these principals buffered the school from the pressures, demands, and rules of the local district and state. The principal at *Ashley*, for example, obtained waivers from state and district regulations that conflicted with the school's mission, and she encouraged her faculty to push the envelope of rigid district regulations. At *Okanagon* the principal encouraged teachers to apply for charter school status. Such buffering protected the school and teachers while they implemented new ideas.

Finally, principals often reminded teachers of the school's vision when they became distracted with the hectic day-to-day pace of the school year. At *Okanagon* this role was evident in the principal's name tag, which reflected his title as "Keeper of the Dream." For him, his role was to continue to develop the culture of the school that embraced an advanced academic curriculum for all students, a family atmosphere, and staff empowerment. He regarded his meetings with team leaders as a place "to practice team-building activities, so

that leaders could model the behaviors of leaders -- of caring, of focusing on learning, ... of keeping the dream alive."

External Control

Several of the SRS schools showed a depth of experience with shared power relations indicating lasting changes in the culture of the school. Such cultures were supported by considerable autonomy from potentially burdensome state and district requirements. The autonomy helped insulate the schools from shifts in district leadership and priority, and to maintain sustained efforts toward their missions. Ashley and Okanagon, for example, each had authority to hire new staff. Principals and staff at these schools also developed impressive credibility with district officials which allowed them great discretion in interpreting district and state guidelines to fit their missions. Red Lake's high levels of student achievement and its strong faculty cohesion provided credibility and power which led the district to "leave it alone." In fact, each of these schools was considered to be sufficiently successful that district authorities tended to praise them as models.

However, in other schools sharing power was fragile -- not because teachers became disinterested or unwilling to step up to the challenges of managing a school, but because external constraints, poor leadership, and traditional tendencies either vitiated their collective will to manage, or undermined basic principles of self-governance. Problems typically occurred not because some were deliberately trying to alter the new power arrangements, but because diverse goals and priorities could not be resolved. Two examples illustrate these points:

- School-based management was the official policy of the district that included *Copan Middle*, and teachers there enthusiastically pursued heterogeneous grouping as a vehicle for increasing equity of outcomes among their students. State mandates, however, required them to reintroduce pullout programs for gifted and talented and special education students.
- At *Humboldt Elementary*, different approaches to teacher teaming and student grouping helped to implement the strong faculty commitment to the principles of the Accelerated Schools Project. But with the departure of the principal who initiated this work, the vitality of shared decision making waned. Whole faculty decision-making meetings and other weekly meetings were not sustained. The school became more balkanized with two relatively autonomous teams, one traditional and one innovative. The new principal regained considerable influence from teachers in the areas of budget and staffing.

Those schools that experienced reenactments of traditional, hierarchical relations of power reflected a salient feature of the states and districts in the study. Most still operated, fundamentally, under the basic principles of bureaucratically organized public agencies. In several cases, state departments of education, legislatures, and districts proposed and mandated policies that applied to all schools which, even when sensible from a state or district perspective, constrained activities at the school level. Districts tended to view principals, not as members of the school team, but as middle-level managers responsible primarily to the central authority, who could be moved or replaced based on central personnel

policies. Shared power relations and more democratic processes within schools were not viewed as critical to schools' success.

Summary

Our analysis of decision making in restructuring schools revealed the following findings:

Many schools that appear to be in the forefront of efforts to involve teachers in decision making have made only superficial changes in their underlying power relations. Teachers may have gained formal positions in governance, but structural changes do not guarantee increased and more equitable influence over school-wide issues.

Restructuring school decision making, in terms of either structures or power relations, does not necessarily improve the quality of pedagogy provided to students. Although all 24 schools implemented innovative structures of shared decision making, they exhibited significant variation in authentic pedagogy. Not every school with altered power relations was successful in authentic pedagogy.

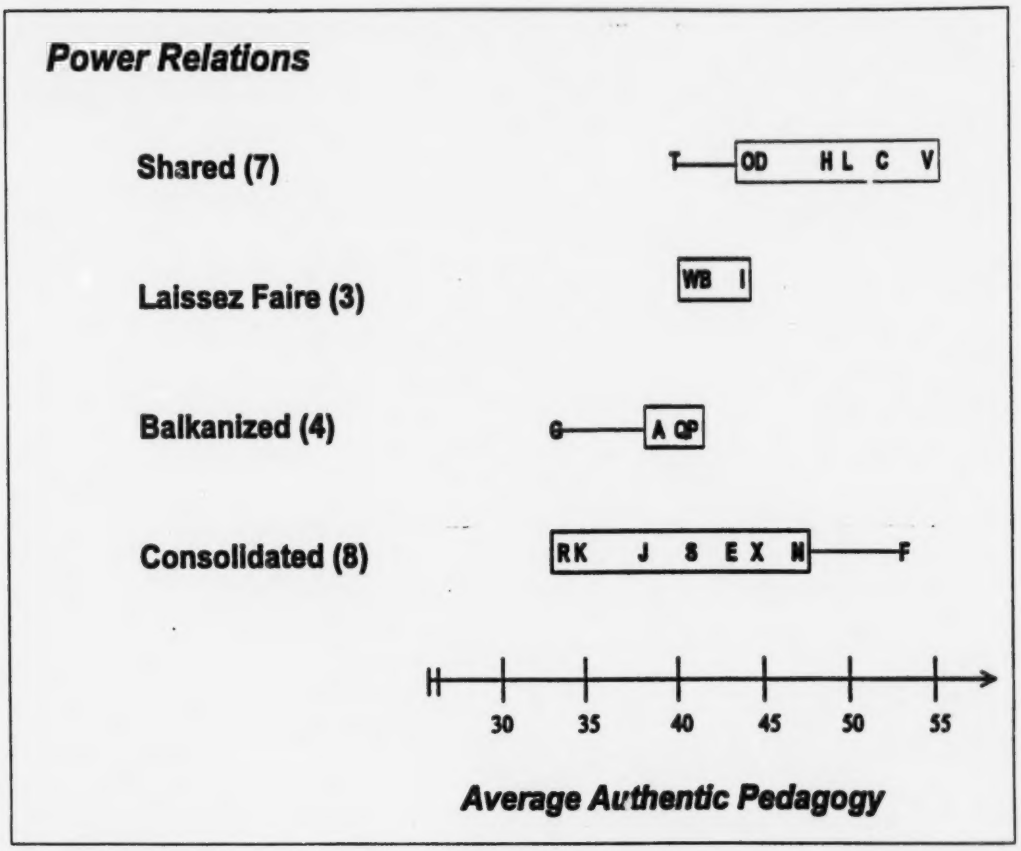
Participatory decision making, when power was shared, could facilitate more authentic pedagogy and learning. Patterns of consolidated, balkanized, laissez-faire, and shared power relations all contained examples of schools scoring close to or above the sample mean on authentic pedagogy. However, within a school culture that values intellectual quality, shared power in decision making reinforced that priority and helped to support sustained programmatic efforts to achieve instructional goals more than the other three patterns. Principal and teacher leadership played a key role in facilitating the sharing of power and advancing the school's vision for high quality teaching and learning.

In showing the importance of shared power, this chapter has illustrated how cultural aspects of a school's power relations interact with formal structures of decision making. Shared power relations are valuable because they can help support intellectual quality and authentic pedagogy. As Chapter 7 demonstrated, shared power can also strengthen the professional community in a school. The quality of power relations within a school can depend substantially on the school's relationship with outside authorities, such as the district. The next chapter explores how districts and other external agencies can affect intellectual quality and professional community in restructuring schools.

Notes to Chapter 10

1. Hannaway (1993) discusses district decentralization processes and their consequences in two districts. See Chubb (1988) and Meier (1995) for examples of arguments for more school autonomy.
2. See Elmore & Associates (1990), Maeroff (1988) and Shedd & Bacharach (1991) for examples of arguments for altered roles in school governance.
3. This assumption is based on a long line of non-educational experiments, in which work redesign that increased the influence of all members of the organization was shown (in some settings) to lead to more effective performance. See Cotton (1988) for one review.
4. For various expressions of these claims, see Darling-Hammond (1988); Elmore & Associates (1990); Maeroff (1988); Shedd & Bacharach (1991). Theories of organizational productivity in the private sector, and their applications to schooling, also make similar arguments; see, e.g., Wohlstetter, Smyer & Mohrman (1994).
5. According to procedures explained in Appendix A, power relations in each school was initially coded as one of the following: consolidated -- principal, consolidated -- small group of staff, shared -- teachers, shared -- teachers and administrators. Through further analysis of the reports for each school, we coded the schools into consolidated, balkanized, laissez-faire, and shared power relations. Coding by each researcher was done independently and discrepancies were discussed until consensus was reached.
6. Island High, described in Chapter 5, also had laissez-faire power relations.

Figure 10.1
Distribution of Restructured Schools on Authentic Pedagogy and Power Relations[a]



[a]Two schools with ambiguous relations are omitted. The three outlier schools in shared, balkanized, and consolidated types reflect means on authentic pedagogy that were more than 3/4 of a standard deviation from the closest school, thus lying outside the cluster.

School Key:	Elementary	Middle	High
	A Humboldt	I Morris	Q Fremont
	B Sumpter	J Selway	R Wallingford
	C Ashley	K Baldwin	S Flinders
	D Eldorado	L Red Lake	T Huron
	E Winema	M Shining Rock	U South Glen
	F Careen	N Copan	V Cibola
	G Falls River	O Okanagon	W Island
	H Lamar	P Ottawa	X Marble Canyon

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